

Given a story setting, the reader draws appropriate conclusions about the time and place.

UNIT 4
Lesson 1
Drawing Conclusions

TECHNICAL TALK

"Once upon a time in a far country there was a beautiful maiden." Maybe you can remember children's stories that start with those words. They are very good words to start with. They tell a lot about what will happen next. You can tell the story is not going to be a true story; it will be a fantasy, probably a fairy tale. You know it will take place in a fantasy land. And you know who at least one of the characters will be. It is all so simple.

But things aren't always so simple in real life. Many storytellers who write modern books do things differently. They tell you what the setting is by giving you clues. You must sometimes draw your own conclusions about where and when the story takes place. This unit asks you to decide about story settings.

TRY IT

Read the story beginning below. Answer the questions about where and when the story takes place.

ROCK BOTTOM

She could barely see. Very little sunlight filtered down this far. What light there was was green. The things around her turned into shadows a few feet away. They disappeared altogether at about 20 feet.

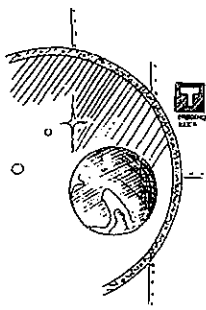
She looked at her watch. There were only 19 minutes left. She felt herself to be in danger, but she often did down here. She knew it was important to watch carefully for sea creatures that might suddenly come out of the murk. But she also knew she must find the boat. If only she had brought a light. If she didn't find them this time, there would be no hope that they could be alive.

Their only hope now was that a large bubble of air had been trapped in part of the boat as it sank. The two of them could breathe from the bubble for perhaps three hours. But this was her third trip down, and their time was almost gone even if they had a bubble. She looked behind her watching her own bubbles trail lazily to the surface. She had to find them. It had to be now.

1. Where does this story take place? _____
2. About how long has the boat been sunk? _____
3. What dangers do you think the diver is thinking about? _____
4. How many people is she looking for? _____
5. Which of these is probably true? _____
 - (a) The story takes place 100 years ago.
 - (b) The story takes place in the present.
 - (c) The story takes place in the distant future.

"Rock Bottom" is the story of an underwater rescue. The author does not start by saying that. He gets you involved in action right away. He gives you clues about where the story is happening. The further you get into the story, the more clues you have. You are forced to draw a conclusion at first about where the rescue takes place. Notice that there is no way to tell whether this story occurs in the present or the future. However, we know that diving like this could not have taken place a hundred years ago. Otherwise, no time setting for the story is suggested. It probably takes place in our own century. Time is important to the diver but not to the story setting.

Read the following story beginning and answer the questions about time and space.



NEW EARTH

He bounced softly in the sandwich bed when the music started. He was weightless, of course, and was used to waking up this way. Soft music filled the compartment. Every morning it was the same. First the soft, slow music came through the system. If you did not wake up then, the music got louder and faster until you had no choice. He slid his hand out of the bed and reached for the computer keyboard. He touched his number.

Immediately a quiet voice spoke to him. The computer knew he was awake.

"Good morning, Hinsley. It is seven-oh-five hours. It is day twelve thousand, two hundred and eighteen of our flight. You are the first of the crew to check in. Do you want today's schedule?"

The voice was quiet and feminine. Except for that gentle urgency it always had, it would have put him back to sleep. He reached for the "yes" button.

"You have seven appointed experiments today. The first is scheduled for ..."

The voice listed all the events that would come up in his day. He had lived so long in the ship that there seemed to be no change. He did not have to give all of his attention to the schedule. It was like many other days.

"On this day," the voice went on, "you will be able to see New Earth for the first time. It will be located in the second quadrant of ..."

He was suddenly completely awake. He pulled himself as quickly as he could from the holddown sheets of the bed and yelled to the others. After all these days, years—they were almost home.

1. Where does the story take place? _____
2. When does the story take place? _____
3. What is expected to happen next? _____
4. Is Hinsley the only human on the ship? _____
5. Why do you think the story is named New Earth? _____

Read this story beginning and answer the questions about its setting.

UNIT 4
Lesson 3
Drawing Conclusions



NEWCOMER

They called it "processing." What a strange word. She said it several times to herself trying to get the accent right.

Anna stood in line waiting for another question. It had happened many times already. They called everyone together and looked at their papers first. Then they were placed in long lines, and they waited. Sometimes you could wait all morning to answer one question. She wondered when the "processing" would be over and she would become, at last, a newcomer.

She tried that word again, too. She could say "I am a newcomer" in English. She planned to say that if she could not understand the people. She knew it would take her months to learn how to speak the language well. That did not worry her. She would learn.

She looked around her at the other people. They all looked like she did. They did not have many clothes. The ones they wore they had worn for weeks. At night they were washed, but the next day they were wrinkled. The clothes and the people looked almost worn out.

They had been on the way for weeks. They had come the only way they could. For many of them who had started in Russia, there had been days of walking and riding cold trains. Next, there were days of waiting for a boat. Then came weeks on shipboard. First they had waited to start the trip. After they started came the waiting to get here. And after they had arrived, there was even a time to wait before they could get off the boat. Now they waited for the "processing." Some of the older people looked confused and tired. You really couldn't blame them.

Anna wasn't confused. She knew exactly where she was going. She was in her new home. She was in America at last, and she was going to be an American—a newcomer American.

1. Where do you think this scene takes place? _____
2. What does Anna want to be? _____
3. When does this story probably take place? (a) 1905 (b) 1975 (c) 1997
4. What problem does Anna expect? _____
5. What country does Anna come from? _____

HOW DID YOU DO?

